

A Great Walled City Taken by Surprise

Pam China
A story of stubborn, changing China

By Charles Ernest Scott

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THE walled cities are the seats of the Chinese gentry—rich, powerful, elegant (after Chinese standards), educated in the ancient learning, glorying in its degrees. These aristocrats have, under Satan, constituted a powerful barrier to the progress of the Gospel in the Land of Sinim,—another “great wall of China,” but vaster than the famed one and unspeakably more impressive in the bulk of its pride, exclusiveness, lofty pretensions, contempt and hate of the foreign devils.

Several years ago, in company with my honored senior colleague, the Rev. W. M. Hayes, D.D., I visited such a walled city, ancient before the discovery of America, one of five big ones in our Station field. The natural importance of this place as an administrative center is enhanced by the fact that it is located on the German railroad. The inveterate prejudice of its inhabitants against foreigners is quite beyond belief. It was probably increased by the fact that the Germans occupied their city until after the defeat of Russia by Japan. These city folks were supposed to be impervious. A German Protestant Mission and the Catholic Mission, neither lacking in learning, experience, or ability, or in funds to push their work, had tackled them. Both had been frozen out.

The gentry there had seen the Bible translated into *Kuan Hwa* (the vernacular); but they turned up their nose at it, as trash beneath their notice, though the language of the translation was what they all spoke, and was excellently done. They despised it because, forsooth, it *was not put into Wen Li*. The moment they saw the New Testament printed in the ordinary “talk language,” they cast it aside. *Wen Li* is “high” stilted Chinese, abbrevi-

ated and intensely idiomatic. It was as if you would insult an American by offering him the American Revision, instead of a Bible in the language of Beowulf. Their pride of scholarship in the Chinese Classics had run well-nigh mad.

Our only human hold on the city was this: Several Christians of one of our near-by country churches, supporting its own pastor, had formed a company and gone into the east suburb—they could not get into the city itself—and had begun selling bean-cakes. Please note that this humble business was one that would bring these Christians into relationship with peasants, not with gentry. But our men were sturdy of faith and had prayer power, and they expected to do something for God. Speedily their store became a rendezvous for many of their fellow farmer Christians who had to market at this large center. And they began to pray together for this hoary, wicked city, that God would, in their midst, open a way—they knew not how—for “the Doctrine.”

Then Dr. Hayes and I received an invitation to go and meet with them—which we accepted. That night after store-closing our little company earnestly besought God to touch the hearts of Kao Mi's heathen, aristocratic leaders. The next morning we had to leave. But that evening something wonderful happened. Some of the gentry, Nicodemus like, “happened in.” To be sure they were young men—older ones would not deign to come—and these came from curiosity. But that night these elegant young bloods, clad in rich, fur-lined brocaded silks, got their eyes opened a little. They found out that we were not ogres, would not even bite; in fact, that we were not so bad as pictured.

The ice was broken. They would associate with us. And the Holy Spirit answered our prayers as to things difficult of accomplishment, and step by step gave us solid standing ground in their midst. He moved upon the Christian business men to give a piece of ground for a Chapel building and part of the funds therefor. In large faith they deeded it to the near-by country church organization “until such time as a church can be organized in the city, when the property shall revert to that City Church.” If an outsider only knew the difficulties that faced them when these four Christian men made that fine

proviso, he would feel almost like classing their decision along with that of many a hero of Hebrews Eleven, who, when all seeming was against him, obeyed the command, apparently impossible of fulfillment, and went forward.

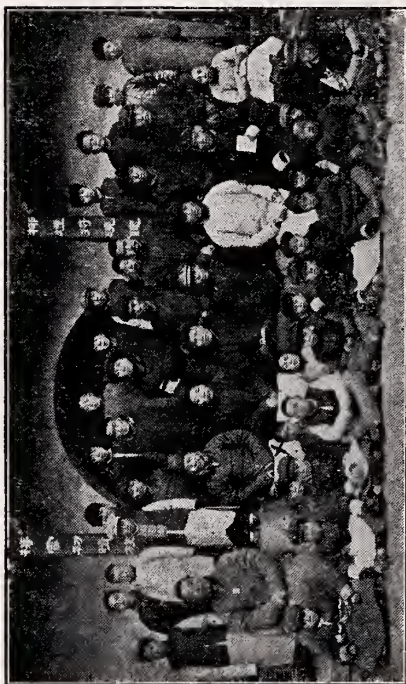
The Chapel next door to "our store" at once gave us a religious center of good repute, especially as the magistrate there gave it his formal, written sanction, putting up a *yamen* proclamation to that effect. It rapidly became popular. The character of our business men and the evangelist recommended the place. The younger gentry, realizing that these men had something that they did not possess, were willing to fraternize with them, coming often to visit and more and more to learn "the Doctrine." As their eyes gradually opened to the light that streams from Christ, and as they began to understand some of the multitudinous corollary blessings that flow from the Cross, a profound dissatisfaction with the old order grew in them. They cursed it—its blindness, its turpitude, its hopelessness, its lifelessness.

Moreover they liked the place because it was a Chinese institution. Though often visiting the chapel and furnishing an evangelist for it, I placed it under the pastoral care of the nearest Chinese minister, and from the start the Christian Chinese took great interest in it, and felt keenly their responsibility for it.

At last there came a day when my food box and bedding failed to arrive; and to my surprise the leader of the gentry invited me to stay at his house. And there I saw eye-opening things—fine old Chinese furniture, rare and costly vases, beautiful plants; also American clocks, clothes, and photographs galore. And I slept on a foreign bed! Like Cornelius, my host (I call the gentry leader that, because now he always insists that I be his guest) assembled his household to hear the Gospel. And from that time every visit was the occasion of his inviting some of his friends to meet me and hear the Gospel. At first, they, like Nicodemus, came in the night; but as we became better acquainted, openly, and at all times of the day.

Things have developed rapidly. Even two years before the establishing of the republic (which guaranteed religious liberty), an influential family of officials who had charge of a government school for

boys, hired, in open defiance of the Manchu government instructions, two of our Christians as teachers, who daily expounded the Scripture in the school. From that family one brother has become a zealous evangelist, and out of that school of thirty boys have come many Christians and inquirers.



The Boys' School—One of Kao Mi's New Achievements

A boys' school, under Christian control, is helping to batter down the "greater wall of China," of which the walled city of Kao Mi has been a powerful section. And this school was organized in the compound owned by Mr. Scott's "host," the leader of the city's aristocrats, who is revolutionizing his conservative community in remarkable ways.

Another gentry family of four brothers and a father, all officials, have established a girls' school in their compound, with one of our best women Christians as teacher.

We have sent Bible women, at the request of such

families, to instruct their women, who have proved eager learners, and have received their "doctrine teachers" most cordially.

Imagine what it means that these people should propose that we unite with them in establishing a boys' school, in which:

1. They would furnish the teacher of the Chinese classics and we the teacher of Western learning.

2. We make the choice of the books to be used in the Union School.

3. At least one-fourth of the course is to be devoted to the teaching of Christian subjects.

Repeatedly I have accepted the invitation of the magistrate to speak before his official schools, especially before the normal school, where hundreds of young men, in six months', nine months', one-year and two-year courses, are hurriedly trying to fit themselves to meet the needs of schools being opened by the republic.

Christians in Kao Mi have steadily multiplied from the gentry ranks, all baptized by the native pastor. There have been two especially interesting and helpful human factors in this consummation.

The gentry have seen in their midst the superiority of Christian schools and teachers. It has been as eye-opening as humbling. They have been profoundly impressed by the fact that our Christian system produces students with usable knowledge at their command, better than anything of which they had conceived. Our teachers of English can do something more than "teach English to the letter G." They know geography, mathematics, calisthenics, music, and many other things involved in the idea of *si wen* (Western learning). It commands their respect that the district magistrate sends his teachers to our men to learn singing, setting-up drill, arithmetic, and to get a little peep into world-doings. Above all, these men have character and are to be trusted.

Then Christianity has brought to many of the Kao Mi gentry a new sense of the value of girls and the dignity and worth of educated women. Mine host has confided to me that the thing that impressed him more than all else with the desirableness and satisfying this sacrament, quite overwhelmed him with a changed conception of life. The music, the presence of foreign ladies, cultured, and honored of men, the brooding peace, the simplicity, dignity, and solemn

ingness of the Christian religion was what he witnessed as a guest in our home, even the baptism of our youngest daughter,—such humble means can the Holy Spirit use to reach a man's heart. The ceremony was performed by Dr. Hayes in the presence of this heathen man and a few missionary friends



A Few Months Later, with All the Boys in Uniform

Heathen boys from heathen homes are the pupils in this school. "The host," who sits at the end of the front row, wearing foreign shoes and hat, not only loaned part of his compound, but equipped the school with supplies, and at his own expense provided the uniforms.

Mr. Scott, in leather suit and sweater, stands next the host.

"refugeeing" with us during troublous revolution days.

To think that he and others should be invited from a distance for the sake of a girl baby; that Dr. Hayes should leave his work in another city to administer

beauty of the service, touched the inner chords of his nature.

His new grip on life that has stirred him to do something for others has been manifested in his opening a Christian middle school for boys in a fine series of rooms on his own compound,—*Christian*, I say, because two of our ablest Christian teachers have been employed in his school; the course conforms to our mission school curriculum, compulsory morning and evening worship obtains; also Sabbath worship, marching in a body to the chapel forenoon and afternoon; and the native pastor is the welcome guest and presiding good genius there over it all,—and remember that these are heathen boys out of heathen families. To further prove his interest mine host has at considerable expense outfitted the school with furniture, maps, charts, etc., and he plans this year to build and run on similar lines a girls' school in another yard of his compound.

In addition to this, he has established a Y. M. C. A. in the city. After seeing ours in our Tsingtau church, he wanted one just like it in his city, and proceeded to organize one (minus the active membership) from among his friends, with the accessory of a reading-room where the élite of his clan could come and leisurely soak in the Christian literature which he had secured.

As a result of his interest aroused and that of his friends, the East Suburb Chapel cannot hold the Christians who now attend the meetings. Another reason for the happy development is the attitude of the Christian business men toward the Sabbath. On Sundays from their store-front always hangs this sign: "This is the Sabbath; no business to-day." While the daily market of that busy street surges in a roar all around them, they stand like Daniel and his friends,—worshiping God on his holy day in his holy sanctuary. Also the members of this firm preach to their customers, and during dull hours go out into the surrounding villages and herald Christ. The Lord is faithful, and has prospered his righteous servants. And they have purchased a two-story *tang pu* (pawnshop), the upper story of which is to be fitted up for an additional school, and the first story for a church. This is only a temporary arrangement.

Recently we called on the magistrate to invite his co-operation in erecting a new church-building. As

things are in China, he could, if he so desired, instantly nip the project in the bud, especially as this is a Chinese church, not a foreign mission affair. He, however, took great interest in the matter, and promised a generous subscription, and issued a proclamation asking the business men to contribute. His wife and mother are Christians. His good-will is partly due to their interest and partly to the fact that years ago he was a pupil of Dr. Hayes in the provincial university, and the flavor of Dr. Hayes' able, scholarly, and consecrated witness is with him still.

After talking with him several times about establishing an official school for the daughters of gentry, he has finally opened one. His wife and mother act as patronesses. He has called a fine Christian woman of our choice as the lady teacher of that school. Unbound feet are a *sine qua non* of entrance, and the school is full to its capacity.

Though used to surprises in this city, one of the biggest came when mine host and the magistrate, speaking for several of the leading gentry, asked me to accompany them to the first National Y. M. C. A. Convention, held in Peking, December, 1912. It was a great venture for them. Of course, I jumped at the chance. And the rich fruitage of that convention, not only in the hearts of the gentry of this city, but of many rich and influential heathen in other centers now for the first time face to face with the truth in Christ,—who can calculate?

And this is the city that only a few months ago was lorded over by a queue-wearing Manchu official of the hopeless old régime. During the revolution he was seizing even our school-boys and shutting them up in a foul prison for the crime of cutting their queues. When, after repeated fruitless attempts, I was at last able to get in to them, some forty were chained, *hand and foot in a sitting posture* in that low, dirty den, their families distressed beyond measure, some of their women folk dying from anxiety and fear.

In an age-long, sin-encrusted gentry center, what-hath God wrought!

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